



Memorandum

Date 25 May 1999

From Ihor J. Masnyk, Ph.D.
CRU Project Director

Subject
Semiannual Report

To
Mr. Barret Fountos

The semiannual report for the period 1 October 1998 to 30 April 1999 is attached.

I am also sending the last quarterly reports from the three projects and recent trip reports.

Our next trip to Ukraine is in late June. We are leaving for Kyiv on 19 June; the Leukemia meeting starts on the 20 June and lasts till 23 June; the Thyroid project review starts on the 24 and last till 26 June

Then we go to Minsk via Moscow (there are no direct flights to Minsk on the weekends). We meet in Minsk 28-30 June.

On the 1 July we should go home but there is some difficulty to get flights the same day in Frankfurt, so some of us may have to stay overnight in Frankfurt.

Please let me know about your plans and what needs you may have concerning visas, hotels etc., if you still plan to go with us.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT STATUS REPORT
For the period 1 October 1998 to 30 April 1999

Submitted by: Ihor J. Masnyk, Ph.D.
U.S. Project Director
CRU, REB, DCEG, NCI

Submission date 24 May 1999

During this six month period the staff working on the Chornobyl projects was organized formally into the Chornobyl Research Unit (CRU) and transferred from the Division of Cancer Biology (DCB), Radiation Effects Branch to Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics (DCEG), Radiation Epidemiology Branch. Dr. Beebe was appointed the head of the unit and I - the Project Director. Dr. Wachholz remained in the DCB.

Efforts were under way to initiate the long-awaited meetings of the Bi-National Advisory Groups and with that in mind a preliminary informative session was organized for the American component on 8 March in Bethesda. The result of this meeting was that much more preparatory work is needed before the principal meetings in Ukraine and Belarus could be organized. Another factor pointing in this direction was that the Belarusian component of this Group was not formed at all. Therefore, Drs. Rabson and Fraumeni canceled this meeting to be rescheduled at a later date.

In the meantime, the DCEG organized the Chornobyl Oversight Panel consisting of principally intramural scientists from this Division to review in detail the organization and operations of the Chornobyl projects. The panel meets monthly and reports quarterly to Dr. Klausner. Dr. Shelia Zahm is chairing this panel.

In January I have learned through the administrative channels that the staff of the Veterans Affairs National Acquisition Center (VANAC) chose not to continue to support us in the area of equipment and supplies procurement, giving us three months notice. My communication with them ended with my last memoranda late December, after which time nobody talked to me concerning our activities. This left us again in a lurch in that, to the best of my knowledge, many of the scheduled procurements were not processed by the VANAC staff. In emergency we turned to our support contract at Columbia University and they came through agreeing to take over this task. In spite of that rapid action, some delays continued to haunt us principally because of the failure of the VANAC staff.

Incidentally, the unspent funds at VANAC have not been returned to NCI as of this writing. The last report of the expended funds is attached to this report.

Columbia contract staff participates actively and effectively in all our activities. They provide technical expertise for the visits to Ukraine and Belarus; they agreed to sign up the

advisers we used in the past as consultants to Columbia and they took over the travel arrangements for all non-government participants. Dr. Howe attends the Chornobyl Oversight Panel meetings and comes once a month to our internal CRU staff conferences. In addition practically daily communications are maintained with technical staff at Columbia.

The CRU staff was increased by one new member: Ms. Kathie Stine joined the group as a program assistant and was assigned to monitor the procurement activities, monitor processing of various documents and agreements, coordinate our relations with other administrative bodies, act as the Co-Project Officer on the Columbia contract and be the executive secretary for the Bi-National Advisory Group. Rather unexpectedly Mr. Jake Wechselberger has resigned from his position early this year.

A change was introduced into the visiting program to Ukraine and Belarus. In the future there will be one large plenary type session on each project in which all involved specialists will partake (this is planned for each spring). In autumn the Bi-national Advisory Group meetings will be held for the two thyroid projects, again attended by principal advisors. In the interim, small groups of specialists will visit their counterparts on narrowly focused technical topics to monitor the progress, review the results obtained, consult when necessary and keep the finger on the pulse of all on going activities. All efforts are being made to increase our physical presence in both Belarus and Ukraine.

The meetings with the French component of leukemia staff continue alternatively between Paris and Bethesda. The last meeting was in March in Paris, the next one is planned for this autumn at NCI. As we approach termination of phase I of the leukemia project, all efforts are directed towards completing the planned tasks and writing the final report on the basis of which the fate of the Phase II will rest. Late in July a meeting of the Leukemia Working Group is planned to review the progress in this project. It will be held in Bethesda.

The arrangement with STCU in Kyiv is proceeding satisfactory. In the future we intend to add the purchases of expendable supplies to this activity, supplies which can and must be procured locally. STCU has been doing this for other projects and we look forward to this opportunity. In Belarus we are in the process of establishing a similar relationship with the International Science and Technology Center (ISTC) to assist us in similar activities for the Belarus project.

At long last some steps were undertaken by the Belarusians to expand their screening activity to a center in Gomel. At present only preparatory steps were undertaken and we expect full discussions during the upcoming visit to Minsk this June. The important thing is that the apparent reluctance to this step on the part of the Belarusian administration was evidently overcome when Dr. Ostapenko became the new Director of the Clinical Research Institute of Radiation Medicine and Endocrinology replacing Dr. Mrochek.